

After giving up his budgetary duties in 1976, Pelton became deeply involved in the super-secret world of Soviet intelligence. In 1978, according to court documents, he authored "a classified document concerning technical information about the Soviet Union."

Although nothing about the report's contents has been made public, it was the information in the report that was the basis of Pelton's apparent importance to the Soviets.

Pelton allegedly traveled to Vienna in October 1980 and January 1983, staying each time three or four days at the apartment of the Soviet ambassador to Austria within the Soviet Embassy's compound. For about eight hours a day on both visits, it is alleged, Pelton was debriefed by a Soviet intelligence officer named Anatoly Slavnov.

Providing written answers to the Soviets' written questions, Pelton later allegedly confided to FBI agents, he was "questioned about every area of sensitive information to which he had access" at the agency, including "all of the programs" outlined in his 1978 report.

Ironically, the man who ultimately put federal agents on Pelton's trail was one of the first Soviet agents that Pelton allegedly

had contact with in January 1980.

According to government documents, Pelton, "acting almost on impulse," decided to call the Soviet Embassy in Washington. Although he did not identify himself, Pelton told the Soviet officials that he had information to discuss with them. Both that phone call and another one made later that day were intercepted and recorded by US agents. The taped conversations are expected to be played for the jury at Pelton's trial this week.

A meeting was scheduled for the next day, Jan. 15, at the embassy. At that time, according to one FBI affidavit, Pelton "agreed to provide sensitive information relating to United States intelligence activities in exchange for payments."

In all, Pelton allegedly received \$35,000 for the information.

In an apparent effort to show his good faith at his first meeting with the Soviets, Pelton "provided information relating to a US intelligence-collection project targeted at the Soviet Union," the FBI affidavit states.

Links to Yurchenko alleged

One of the Soviet officials who allegedly briefed Pelton in Washington was Vitaly Yurchenko, who served as chief security officer for the Soviet Embassy from 1975 to 1980.

Yurchenko was also a high-ranking official in the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency. Yurchenko was obviously adept at his work. After Pelton allegedly spent the day inside the Soviet compound, Yurchenko had him shave off his beard and put on work clothes in an effort to avoid possible detection by US surveillance.

Last August, Yurchenko, having risen to the No. 5 position in the KGB, defected to the West. Among other things, he told US agents of his contacts with a former employee of the National Security Agency who had provided valuable intelligence information. Yurchenko professed, however, not to know the name of the man.

In early November, Yurchenko renounced his defection and returned to the Soviet Union. But his story about the former National Security Agency employee had set off a feverish search inside the US intelligence community about who might have sold the information to the Soviets. US agents began to target Pelton as a suspect by Oct. 15; court records show that on that date the FBI sought authorization to tap phones at Pelton's apartment, two businesses in Silver Springs, Md., where he had worked in recent months, a Georgetown health club he had joined and his girlfriend's apartment.

The court records do not indicate what information those government taps may have produced. The next month, on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, Pelton received a midmorning phone call from David Faulkner, an FBI counterintelligence agent.

Faulkner told Pelton that he wanted to discuss with him a matter of "extreme urgency." By that midnight, Pelton would be arrested and charged with selling top secret US intelligence to the Soviets.